CELEB BUCKET LISTS FOR END TIMES

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT, AND COMMUNITY'S JOEL MCHALE FEELS FINE PAGE 17

VANCOUVER metro®

Tuesday, December 18, 2012

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Women let down by 'blatant failures': Pickton report

Forsaken. Oppal slams bias against sex workers, police indifference

Police investigations into the missing and murdered women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were "blatant failures," according to the scathing final report from the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Commissioner Wally Oppal made his report, titled "Forsaken," public Monday afternoon and he didn't hold back his criticism of police indifference, systemic bias against the women and the lack of co-ordination that allowed serial killer Robert Pickton — the worst in Canadian history — to prey on sex-trade workers for years before being arrested in 2002.

"What we're here to discuss is a tragedy of epic proportions. This is a strong report. We have criticized where criticism is deserved," Oppal said during an emotional press conference where dissatisfied community groups constantly heckled and interrupted him. "It is time to stop the violence. It is time to stop talking about it and do something."

Oppal outlines 63 wide-ranging recommendations in the 1,448-word report.

They include creating a regional police force, financially compensating the victims' families, funding existing support services for sex-trade workers, requiring police to hire full-time sex-trade liaison positions, and improving public transit along the infamous Highway of Tears between Price Rupert and Prince George.

Steps to better understand and address societal issues of poverty, access to justice and aboriginal challenges are also included in the report.

Oppal said one of the most crucial failures was ignoring the evidence of a woman who survived a 1997 stabbing at Pickton's farm.

Although he cast no blame on prosecutors for staying an attempted-murder charge in the incident, police were chastised for not following up on her allegations that Pickton would often pick up women in the Downtown Eastside and take them to his farm.

Attorney General Shirley Bond was brought to tears while responding to the report on behalf of the government.

"To read words like 'nobodies,' 'vulnerable women,' 'throwaways,' it's almost impossible to imagine that could have happened in the province of British Columbia," she said. "Our government intends to determine a specific course of action in the days ahead."

Effective immediately, former lieutenant-governor Steven Point will chair a committee to make sure Oppal's recommendations are implemented and that aboriginal communities and the victims' families remain involved.

Bond also announced $750,000 in funding to allow the Wish drop-in centre to expand services for sex-trade workers. She added the Criminal Justice Branch is already looking at ways to improve dealings with vulnerable witnesses. **MATT KIELTYKA/METRO**

MORE COVERAGE, PAGES 3 & 4

Cee Jai Julian, left, cries as Commissioner Wally Oppal, background, delivers his final report on the findings of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry in Vancouver on Monday. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

All cleared with nowhere to play

Vancouver Canuck Alex Edler has the green light to return to action, but the lockout has him sitting on the sidelines PAGE 23

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Missed opportunity

Investigating 1997 survivor incident

"The likelihood that the assault on Ms. Anderson was not a 'one-off' was clear, and thus it was patently unreasonable that the investigation was not pursued more fully at the time. That evidence together with the earlier incident of sexual assault relating to Pickton were crucial facts that were completely ignored."

WALLY OPPAL'S FINAL REPORT

Failure

'Obligation to warn' the public

"I conclude that the VPD was under an obligation to warn women in the DTES and they utterly failed to do so. There is no sound evidence of investigative reasons not to issue a warning. In fact, the opposite is true: Such a warning could have served a dual purpose of preventing victims and eliciting tips that in turn could have protected more women."

WALLY OPPAL'S FINAL REPORT

The report on the findings of the Missing Women Commission is seen during a news conference in Vancouver on Monday.

JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Irregular meetings

Jurisdictional boundaries created barriers

"While the VPD and RCMP attempted to overcome jurisdictional boundaries on an ad hoc basis, communication and co-ordination were inconsistent and erratic, and the irregular meetings were of negligible benefit. These cross-jurisdictional barriers contributed significantly to the blatant overall failures."

WALLY OPPAL'S FINAL REPORT

Females

Systemic bias against women

"I find that systemic bias: (1.) Allowed faulty stereotyping of street-involved women in the DTES (Downtown Eastside) to negatively impact missing women investigations, and (2.) Resulted in the failure to take the nature of the women's lives into account in policing strategies, particularly in failing to recognize the duty to protect an endangered segment of our community." WALLY OPPAL'S FINAL REPORT

Unified police a divisive issue

Regional force? Report recommends forming a Greater Vancouver police force, but many say it's unlikely to happen

The biggest recommendation to come out of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry report may be the most unlikely to happen.

In releasing his five-volume, 1,448-page final report into the investigations of serial killer Robert Pickton, Wally Oppal called for the formation of a regional "Greater Vancouver police force."

The fragmented nature of the investigations between Vancouver police and the RCMP was a "major causal factor" in the botched investigations.

Pickton's spree probably would have continued even beyond 2002, when a junior RCMP officer conducted an unrelated search warrant for weapons at the killer's Port Coquitlam farm and discovered — by chance — items belonging to his victims.

"Pickton wasn't even making any attempt to hide the fruits of his violent acts, it was there for everyone to see," said Oppal. "Throughout the inquiry, I found it somewhat disconcerting and a bit unseemly that there was a pointing of the finger going on between Vancouver police and the RCMP."

Oppal's report says there was enough evidence in 1998 to take a multi-jurisdictional approach to the investigation, but a Joint Force Operation wasn't put together until June 2001.

The three-year delay was "wholly unacceptable," according to Oppal.

"It is this issue — the inability of the police forces, on a management level, to work together — that we've recommended a type of regional policing," Oppal said. "Right now, we have a fractionalized type of policing system."

However, the provincial government recently signed a 20-year contract extension with the RCMP even though it knew regional policing would be an issue at the inquiry.

On Monday, Attorney General Shirley Bond was noncommittal, but said it's not too late to consider a regional police force.

"We have an RCMP contract in place, but there is an opt-out clause should there be a decision to move to another model," said Bond. "In B.C. we have emphasized integration.... If integration isn't meeting those outcomes we have to have a discussion about how to do that."

Bond said there has been a lack of "consensus" between municipalities on policing.

Despite Oppal's condemnation of the communication between police forces, Deputy Commissioner Craig Callens said the RCMP "remains committed to a co-operative and co-ordinated approach" to conducting major criminal investigations and policing in B.C.

"Policing is constantly evolving, and on an ongoing basis it is necessary for us to look critically at how we deliver policing services to ensure that we respond effectively to our communities needs and expectations," he said.

Vancouver police said it needs time to consider Oppal's report, although Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson said the city is in favour of a regional police force.

MATT KIELTYKA AND EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Commissioner Wally Oppal pauses for a moment as he delivers the final report on the findings of the Missing Women Commission in Vancouver on Monday.

JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Reactions to the report

"This is the first time (Native people have] been asked what changes we want with the justice system, and it's about time."

Steven Point, appointed by the government to implement recommendations

"It has a whole range of recommendations that people need to read carefully."

Ernie Crey, brother of Dawn Crey, whose DNA was found on Pickton's farm

"(Wally Oppal) does feel for the families, you can see that in his heart."

Lilliane Beaudoin, sister of victim Dianne Rock

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East Vancouver. School locked down after threats

Thunderbird Elementary School in East Vancouver went into lockdown Monday morning after a violent threat was made against the school.

Sgt. Randy Fincham said the threat led police to believe that there was a risk to the safety of students and teachers.

He couldn't give specifics about the threat due to a police investigation but said it came from a third party.

"We were advised by telephone that there (were) comments made about the school. That someone in relation to the school's safety was in danger," said Fincham.

"Whether the threat was intended or whether it was a hoax, we want to speak to this person and determine why something like this would happen."

Police stayed at the school from the time the threat was made, around 10 a.m., to when the school let out for the day.

School board spokesman Kurt Heinrich said the lockdown was proof their system works. "The children were always completely safe," he said.

"The VPD were there incredibly quickly. After the police were able to conduct their investigation it was deemed OK to change the code yellow back to a code green."

Fincham stressed police are not taking the situation lightly.

"We've seen within Canada and within the U.S. these (incidents) have a huge impact on families and society as a whole. We do not want to see this ... happen anywhere."

CARA MCKENNA/METRO

Aggravated assault

B.C. man pleads to setting teen on fire

A 20-year-old Kelowna man has pleaded guilty to setting a friend on fire at a house party.

Matthew Sweet-Grant was charged last week with aggravated assault and assault with a weapon after an 18-year-old man who fell asleep on the floor in the home was set on fire Dec. 8. The victim received treatment for second- and third-degree burns.

Josh McWhirter, 18, has also been charged with aggravated assault after he allegedly taped the incident.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pickton report slams police, praises profiler

'There will be another serial killer.' Report recommends regional police force to avoid the same fatal mistakes

EMILY JACKSON
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Missing women are honoured during a vigil outside the building where inquiry commissioner Wally Oppal released his report on the Pickton inquiry findings in Vancouver on Monday. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

All the evidence pointed to a serial killer.

By September 1998, former Vancouver police detective Kim Rossmo concluded a repeat murderer was at work based on an analysis of statistics relating to the missing Downtown Eastside women.

But the police force, specifically Insp. Fred Biddlecombe, rejected his conclusion, with many police citing the mantra "no body, no crime," according to Wally Oppal's final report on the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, released Monday.

At least 13 women were reported missing in the years between Rossmo's analysis and convicted serial killer Robert Pickton's 2002 arrest.

While Oppal's comprehensive report addresses the investigation's failures, its release is just the beginning, Rossmo said in an email Monday.

"His recommendations must be acted upon by the provincial government, British Columbia's various municipal police departments, and the RCMP," he said.

Rossmo, a highly acclaimed criminal profiler and a professor at Texas State University, said the report "shows an understanding of the realities, complexities, and subtleties of what went wrong and proposes a number of important recommendations for change."

Oppal praised Rossmo multiple times in his report and called him a "credit to policing and our community."

The report calls for a regional police force based on Rossmo's assertion that "history tells us there will be another serial killer."

"Let's not wait for the next Robert Pickton to strike," Oppal wrote.

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Man charged in daycare assaults

Shining Stars Daycare. Man accused of sexually assaulting children at wife's daycare in basement of family home

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A man has been charged with sexually assaulting young children at the daycare his wife ran out of their Maple Ridge home.

Latif Hamad Tata, 37, is accused of multiple counts of sex assault at the Shining Stars Daycare on 122 Avenue near Maple Ridge Christian School and Fairview Elementary.

"The young victims were left in the care of the daycare, which runs out of the basement of the family's home," Ridge Meadows RCMP Cpl. Alanna Dunlop said in a statement.

It's unclear how many alleged victims there are, but Tata was arrested Thursday and will remain in custody until his next court appearance.

The serious crimes unit spent the past weekend interviewing children and parents. Police ask that any other alleged victims or witnesses come forward.

Police have notified both the Ministry for Children and Family Development and Fraser Health's community care facilities licensing department of the charges.

The daycare should not be confused with the Shining Stars Montessori Daycare and Preschool in east Maple Ridge.

Concerned parents whose children attended the daycare who have not already been contacted by RCMP are ask to call Ridge Meadows RCMP at 604-463-6251.

Stanley Park. Wild storm surge closes seawall

This section of the Stanley Park seawall was damaged by high winds and surging water on Monday. COURTESY OF CITY OF VANCOUVER

Strong winds and high tides closed off and damaged parts of Stanley Park's seawall Monday and flooded a West Vancouver park.

The storm surge caused significant damage to the seawall from Second Beach to Siwash Rock, including logs and debris on the pathway.

The shore along Jericho Beach and West Vancouver's Ambleside Beach park were flooded. Jericho Pier was also damaged as a storm surge hit the coast.

Officials temporarily closed Stanley Park's seawall between Third Beach and Lions Gate Bridge as a precaution at around 9 a.m.

Further assessment of damage will take place once water has receded. METRO

Burnaby

Tire slasher causes more than $200K in damage

Burnaby RCMP are looking for a tire-slashing vandal responsible for more than $200,000 in damage.

From Dec. 2 to 8, tires were slashed in five separate areas of Burnaby on streets and in parking lots.

According to RCMP, the vandalism happens late at night and early in the morning.

About 249 cars have had tires slashed or punctured to date.

RCMP say similar incidents have happened throughout the year in Burnaby and they are looking for public assistance in identifying the person responsible.

CARA MCKENNA/METRO

Delta

Man and dog die at scene of vehicle crash

A Delta man and his dog were killed in a single-vehicle crash on Highway 91 Sunday night.

The southbound Toyota Corolla spun out of control and struck a lamp standard near the Nordel Way off-ramp at about 10:30 p.m., police say.

Luis Ronald Calderon Sanchez, along with his pet dog, both died at the scene.

Sanchez's car hit the lamp directly on the driver's-side door with enough force to wrap the car around the pole.

Police urged the public to slow down when driving at this time of the year.

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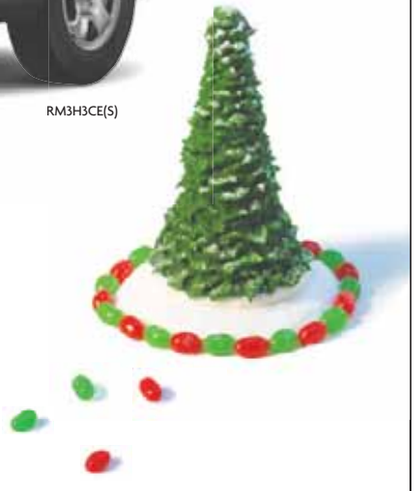

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Metro reporters share their favourite stories of 2012.

B.C. case blows lid off under-reported epidemic

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among teens in Canada (after vehicle fatalities), but you'd never know it.

As a society, we've been conditioned, from the media all the way down to the family, to avoid talking about the problem. We make only vague references and use misdirection (how many times have you read about a "non-suspicious death" after a public disruption?) to shield ourselves.

The only time society tackles the issue head-on is usually on Sept. 10, World Suicide Prevention Day, where experts tell us our everlasting silence hampers public awareness of mental-health issues and creates an environment where kids may not feel comfortable telling loved ones how much they're suffering.

No more. Not after the death of Amanda Todd.

The public nature of her online pleas and the undeniable aftermath gave us no choice but to confront the harsh reality of teen suicide.

While the stories and international coverage may have been too intense for some, and made others wary, they forced us to talk about bullying, depression and suicide prevention.

And whether we like it or not (or are even aware of it), kids are already broadcasting these issues online for the world to see.

Let's keep the conversation going. **MATT KIELTYKA/METRO**

Top stories of the year

- **Wednesday:** Reporter Emily Jackson shares her favourite story of the year.
- **Have your say:** Vote for the top stories of 2012 at metronews.ca before Thursday. Readers' picks will be published on Friday.

B.C. women earn less than Canadian average

Canadian women earn on average $2,700 less than their counterparts in other provinces. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO

Income disparity.

Average female in the province made $2,700 less than their counterparts across the country in 2010

EMILY JACKSON
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It hasn't been a great decade for female breadwinners in B.C.

Despite a slow increase in wages, West Coast women have earned less than the average Canadian woman since 2002, according to a report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released Monday.

In 2010, B.C. women made $2,700 less than their counterparts in other provinces, according to report author Marjorie Griffin Cohen, a political-science professor at SFU.

And their salaries are growing more slowly, at 0.49 per cent a year compared to 1.4 per cent for the rest of Canada. In the 1990s, B.C. women typically earned more than the national average.

Cohen blames the B.C. Liberals' labour policies since 2001 as particularly bad for women, who earn on average 65 per cent of what men make.

"The various attempts in B.C. to keep wages from rising appear to have had an impact on low-income earners over the past 10 years," Cohen said, adding that women "disproportionately make up those low-wage workers."

These policies could be why most women didn't support B.C. Premier Christy Clark in a June Ipsos Reid poll, Cohen suggested. She pointed to the wage freeze for public-sector employees, most of whom are women; the $8-per-hour minimum wage (it was finally increased to $10.25 in 2011); and the $6-per-hour wage for a worker's first 500 hours (also abolished in 2011) that affected immigrant women workers.

Meanwhile, B.C. women with full-time, full-year employment have average earnings of $47,500. They make about $200 more than the typical Canadian woman.

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Shortfall. After 10 years of cuts, VSB might have to trim some more

As the Vancouver School Board (VSB) prepares for a predicted $24.3-million funding shortfall come spring, chair Patti Bacchus says there's simply no fat left to trim.

The shortfall was recently increased from $20.8 million due to recently announced increases to pension-plan contributions.

"We're now cutting into the bone," said Bacchus, who added that the VSB has already cut librarian hours, made cuts to ESL and special-needs programs and even turned down the heat in schools.

"Frankly, to take things down much more it really concerns me."

Bacchus said that although the board is hopeful they will get more provincial funding, they are still preparing to make further cuts.

"Steadily, our funding has not met our cost increases," she said.

"In the last 10 years there's had to be cuts, and if you add those up over 10 years it's about $80 million cumulative in Vancouver."

The VSB will meet on Tuesday evening to discuss budget projections for the spring.

CARA MCKENNA/METRO

Fort St. John

Conservationists decry wolf-kill contest

A conservation group is calling on the Mounties in Fort St. John to stop what it calls an illegal wolf-killing contest. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Coquihalla

Bus skids avoiding vehicle on road

RCMP say a Greyhound bus that skidded off the Coquihalla Highway early Monday morning was trying to avoid a broken-down vehicle on the road.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Lame duck in Surrey gives Ikea a run for its monkey

Online. To watch a video of Duck Duck meeting Christmas shoppers, visit metronews.ca and search 'lame duck'

KATE WEBB
kate.webb@metronews.ca

Duck Duck, as he is affectionately known as, is stealing shoppers' hearts at Art Knapp Plantland in Surrey.

KATE WEBB/METRO

The Ikea monkey is so last week.

A plant nursery in south Surrey is raising the next big animal celebrity: a crippled duck that charms customers by following them around while they do their Christmas shopping.

Duck Duck, as he is affectionately known to everyone at Art Knapp Plantland, had a splayed leg when he was hatched in an incubator last July as part of the store's hobby duck business.

With lots of individual attention, he was eventually able to walk, but in the process he became thoroughly imprinted on four female staffers who carried him around in their aprons.

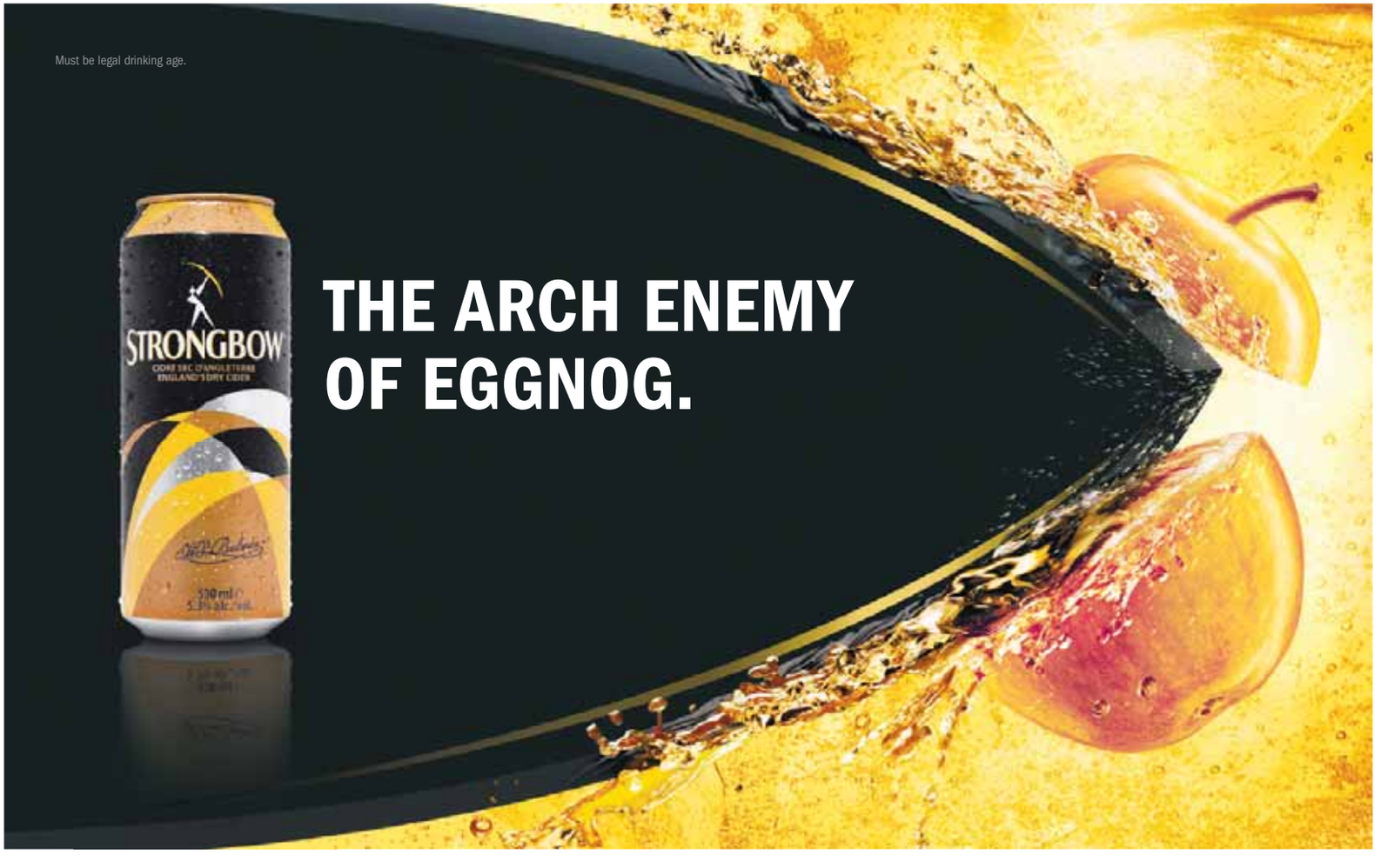
Assistant manager Shawneen Esson said the Golden 300 purebred is every bit as taken with humans as they are with him.

"He's more afraid of other ducks at this point," she said.

"He'll stand for pets. He always keeps at that couple-inch distance, almost like a cat, but he particularly likes women and children, and he'll follow them around the nursery the whole time."

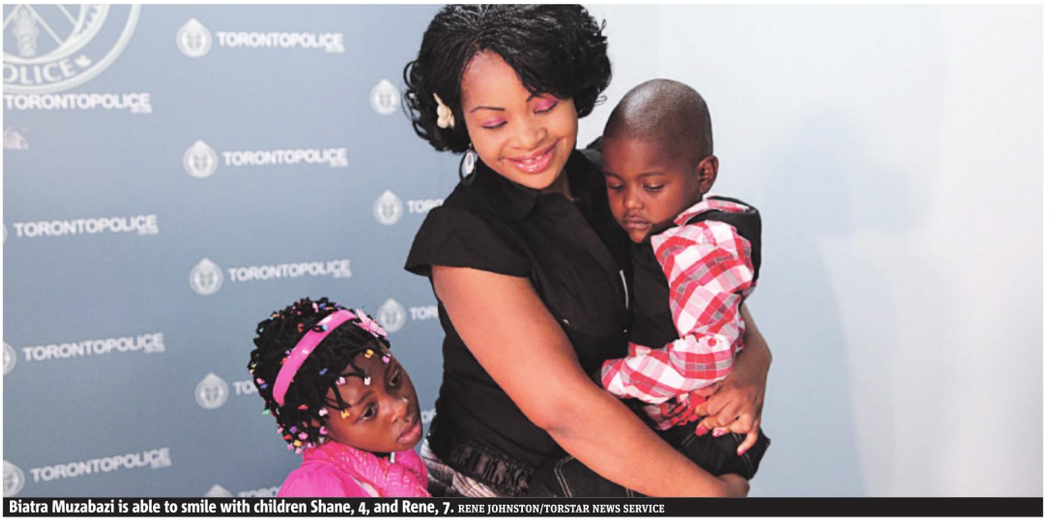
In recent weeks Duck Duck has taken to sporting a red Christmas ribbon around his neck, which he doesn't seem to mind, or even notice. He's too busy sticking his beak in everyone's baskets and hunting for stray Cheerios the customers bring him as gifts.

"He's become quite a mascot for the store," Esson said. "He will stay here forever, and in the spring next year we're going to make him a nice enclosure and he can have duck babies and a wife."



After eight months, mom has her missing kids back for Christmas

Reunited. Horror began in April when her children were not returned from a trip to her native Zimbabwe



Biatra Muzabazi is able to smile with children Shane, 4, and Rene, 7. RENE JOHNSTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A Toronto mom reunited with her two kids after eight months broke down Monday as she thanked those who helped bring the family back together in time for the holidays.

Biatra Muzabazi said she thought she would never get her boy and girl back from Zimbabwe, where they had gone on vacation in April but not returned.

"You made it possible for me to be with my children for Christmas," Muzabazi said, clutching her kids and choking back tears.

Police allege family members hid the pair at a Zimbabwean boarding school.

Authorities decided the best way to effect a possible return was to send Muzabazi to Zimbabwe, even raising the money to help make that happen.

Zimbabwean authorities accepted the children belonged with their mother in Canada. However, the paternal family wasn't ready to turn them over.

At one point, as Muzabazi waited outside the boarding school, a family member took the kids and fled.

Running out of money, the distraught mother said she was on the verge of giving up and returning to Canada without her children.

Then, the Canadian embassy in Harare called her last week to say the children had been dropped off there.

"I just started crying. I couldn't believe it," she said.

As the wide-eyed young ones clutched their mother and watched the throng of news people, Muzabazi said her daughter still appears fretful about any separation.

"She just can't go far away from me," Muzabazi said. "She just wants to be with me all the time."

A criminal investigation was ongoing, police said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Background

Kids kept a world away

The saga began in April, when Rene, 7, and Shane, 4, went for a visit to Muzabazi's native Zimbabwe, something that had occurred several times before without incident.

This time, however, the divorced mother began to worry when the children, who were born in Mississauga, Ont., were not returned to Canada as previously scheduled.

Instead, paternal family members placed the kids in a Zimbabwean boarding school, which actively hid them from local authorities, police allege.

In September, the worried mother approached Toronto police.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Ritalin not for the healthy, journal asserts

Doctors should think twice about prescribing drugs like Ritalin and Adderall used to treat attention deficit disorder to healthy people seeking to boost their brain power, says an article in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

There is little data in Canada on how widespread the practice is, but some studies suggest that between one per cent and 11 per cent of university students take cognitive-enhancing medications, obtaining them through peers or black market channels.

The authors argue there are several reasons why doctors should avoid prescribing ADD drugs to patients who don't have symptoms.

For one, it's unclear whether the medications confer any benefit — and their side-effects may cause harm.

"There isn't a lot of evidence to suggest that these medications actually work for healthy individuals," said lead author Cynthia Forlini, a PhD candidate in neuroethics at McGill University, noting that while some studies have shown modest effects, much of the evidence has been anecdotal.

"But there's no kind of resounding call to say this is something that is supported by scientific data."

Dr. David Juurlink, head of clinical pharmacology and toxicology at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto, said the potential harms associated with the drugs are important for doctors — and patients — to consider.

"For the most part, these drugs are chemically similar to amphetamines and ... these drugs are expected to share some side effects with amphetamines," he said.

"And those would include, but are not limited to, increased blood pressure, increased risk of stroke and myocardial infarction (heart attack), psychosis and insomnia, as well as the potential risk of addiction."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Nova Scotia

Grade 3 teacher convicted of sex offences resigns

A Nova Scotia school board is going to pay the bill for a judicial review that involved an ex-Grade 3 teacher who was convicted of committing indecent acts.

He pleaded guilty to sexual offences but an arbitrator decided he should get his job at an elementary school in New Germany back, and that decision was upheld by a court. However, in a settlement with the board Peter Speight has agreed to resign and will lose his teaching licence in Nova Scotia as part of the deal.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

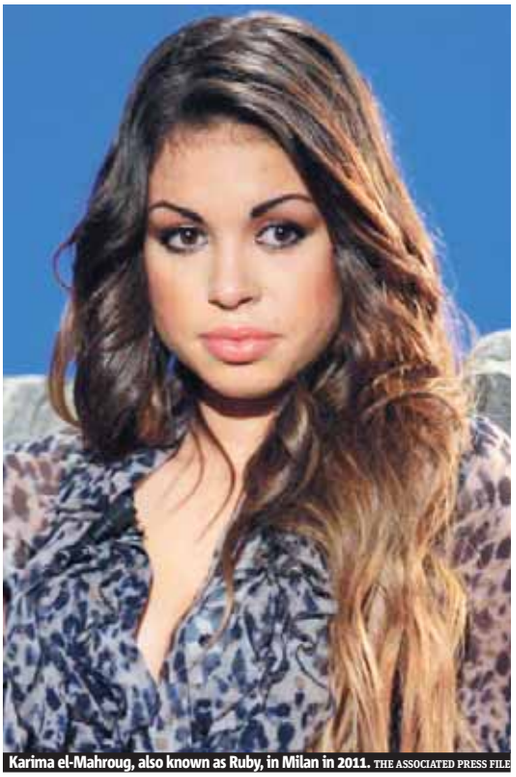
Splitting up in Brazil

New law makes divorce easier

The number of Brazilians getting divorced is at a record high. According to their statistics agency, more than 350,000 divorces occurred in 2011, up 46 per cent from 2010.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Court fines Moroccan woman



Karima el-Mahroug, also known as Ruby, in Milan in 2011. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Italy. Main witness failed to appear at Berlusconi sex trial; prosecution accuses the defence of trying to delay a verdict

A Milan court fined a Moroccan woman at the centre of Silvio Berlusconi's sex-for-hire scandal 500 euros (about $650) on Monday for failing to appear as a witness twice at the former prime minister's trial. It ordered her to testify in January.

Karima el-Mahroug, also known as Ruby, is the last witness to be called in the sensational trial that accuses Berlusconi of having paid for sex with el-Mahroug when she was 17, and then trying to cover it up. Both deny having had sex.

The court ordered el-Mahroug, who is in Mexico on vacation, to testify on Jan. 14, confirming the necessity of her testimony.

Prosecutors have accused the defence, which called el-Mahroug as a witness, of engaging in a strategy to delay a verdict — which has included calling witnesses who have failed to show.

Controversial former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, left, recently announced he is engaged to Francesca Pascale, 28, right, who is part of a support group called Silvio, we miss you. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Italian law does not carry particularly strict penalties against witnesses who fail to appear, and in some cases the court may decide their participation is not essential.

Prosecutors are scheduled to give their closing arguments on Jan. 28, followed by the defence on Feb. 4.

That leaves room for the verdict to be delivered in February, just as Italy is headed toward a national election. The 76-year-old Berlusconi has flirted with running again, but most recently has said he would step aside if Premier Mario Monti, who runs a technical government that replaced Berlusconi's, decides to run as a moderate.

In a weekend interview, Berlusconi apologized for his now-infamous "bunga, bunga" parties, saying he was lonely after having split from his second wife. Veronica Laria left him in 2008, citing alleged dalliances with young women.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gun control. Debate simmers as Democrats call for ban on assault rifles

A U.S. senator and lifelong member of the National Rifle Association became the most prominent gun-rights advocate to speak out after last week's school shooting, saying Monday that it was time for the debate to move beyond political rhetoric and for an honest discussion to begin about reasonable restrictions on guns.

As many gun-rights advocates and politicians remained silent, the killing of 20 children as young as six years old led conservative Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin to speak out.

"Never before have we seen our babies slaughtered. It's never happened in America that I can recall, seeing this carnage," Manchin told MSNBC. "Anybody that's a proud gun owner, a proud member of the NRA, they're also proud parents, they're proud grandparents. They understand this has changed where we go from here."

The self-described "proud outdoorsman and hunter" added, "I don't know anyone in the sporting or hunting arena that goes out with an assault rifle, I don't know anybody who needs 30 rounds in a clip to go hunting."

Democrats say the "meaningful action" Obama has spoken of in the wake of last week's shooting must include a ban on the military-style assault weapons and a look at how the country deals with individuals suffering from serious mental illness.

Gun control was a hot topic in the early 1990s, when Congress enacted a 10-year ban on assault weapons. But since that ban expired in 2004, few Americans have wanted stricter laws, and politicians say they don't want to become targets of a powerful gun-rights lobby. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Speaking out

- **Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman** said it was time to take a deeper look into the recent series of mass shootings.
- **Sen. Dianne Feinstein** said she will introduce legislation next year to ban new assault weapons.
- **New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg** said Obama could use executive powers to enforce existing gun laws.

Tasha Devoe, left, of Lawrence, Mass., joins a march on Monday to the National Rifle Association headquarters on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Curbing gun violence will be a top priority of U.S. President Barack Obama's second term, aides say. MANUEL BALCE CENETA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Students embrace while wearing Newtown school sweaters outside the funeral on Monday for six-year-old student shooting victim Jack Pinto in Newtown, Conn. Friday's massacre has brought the gun-control debate in the U.S. to a boiling point. CHARLES KRUPA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Students mourn slain classmates

Connecticut shooting. Gunman's motive still unknown, but investigators believe he attended Sandy Hook

Coping with fear

"I don't want to see my kids go to schools that become maximum-security fortresses. That's not the world I want to live in, and that's not the world I want to raise them in." Noah Pozner mourner Ray DiStephan

The Connecticut town shattered by last week's school massacre held its first two funerals on Monday, as officials weren't sure whether the school itself would ever reopen. Nervous students and teachers across the U.S. returned to classrooms under tighter security.

Family, friends and townspeople streamed out of two funeral homes after saying goodbye to Jack Pinto, who loved the New York Giants football team, and Noah Pozner, who liked to figure out how things worked mechanically. Friends and loved ones headed for two cemeteries afterward.

In front of the funeral home where relatives were mourning Noah, well-wishers placed two teddy bears, a bouquet of white flowers and a single red rose at the base of a maple tree. Hymns rang out from inside the funeral home where Jack's service was being held. "The message was: You're secure now. The worst is over," one mourner, Gwendolyn Glover, said.

The boys were being buried a day after the small community of Newtown came together for a vigil where President Barack Obama said he will use "whatever power" he has to prevent similar massacres.

"What choice do we have?" he said. "Are we really prepared to say that we're powerless in the face of such carnage, that the politics are too hard?"

Investigators have offered no motive for the shooting, and the Connecticut community is struggling to comprehend what drove 20-year-old Adam Lanza to shoot his mother to death at home in bed on Friday morning, drive her car to the school and unleash gunfire on six adults and 20 children.

Obama has given no specifics on what he might do, and White House spokesman Jay Carney on Monday warned that "no single piece of legislation or action will fully address the problem." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Governor's summer holiday didn't break conflict rules: BoC

Most boring cottage party ever? Carney vacationed with Liberal finance critic while he was being courted for leadership race

The Bank of Canada says there was no impropriety in governor Mark Carney's accepting an invitation to stay at a cottage belonging to Liberal finance critic Scott Brison. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

The Bank of Canada tried to quell questions about its governor's impartiality and judgment on Monday, saying Mark Carney was not afoul of conflict rules by vacationing in the summer at the cottage of the Liberal finance critic.

The central bank confirmed a weekend report that Carney stayed at Scott Brison's Nova Scotia cottage while key members of the Liberal party were courting him for the leadership.

Spokesman Jeremy Harrison said there was nothing improper in the visit, and that bank duties were not discussed.

"The Bank of Canada's general counsel, who is responsible for enforcing the bank's conflict-of-interest policy, has assessed that this visit does not breach the bank's conflict-of-interest guidelines in any way," Harrison said.

"Neither the Bank of Canada nor governor Carney have an actual or potential commercial or business relationship with Mr. Brison."

Harrison added that Carney and Brison had been friends for about a decade and that the visit to the MP's cottage at Cheverie, N.S., cannot "be defined as partisan or political activity."

Brison confirmed the friendship, which began in 2004 when Carney was an associate deputy finance minister and the Nova Scotia MP was the Liberal public works minister, but refused to elaborate about the visit. "We entertain friends often at our Cheverie home. It is not our intention to publicly discuss personal time with friends in our private space," he said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Public consultation

CRTC wants input on 911 service

The CRTC is asking Canadians for ideas on how to improve the 911 emergency service in light of changing technology.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is looking at how 911 services are impacted by the telecommunications system's evolution to next-generation networks based on Internet Protocol. The CRTC will review the findings of the public consultation by the end of next May.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Discount travel

Air Canada sets launch date for new carrier

Air Canada plans to launch its new low-cost airline on Tuesday in Toronto. The company gave few details but promised more information would be released at the event. The unnamed discount carrier will focus on leisure destinations in the United States and Caribbean and some routes in Europe. THE CANADIAN PRESS

RIM. Rogers begins orders for 'all-touch' BB10 devices

Rogers Communications says that its current wireless customers are now able to place orders for BlackBerry 10 smartphones.

The new BlackBerry 10 devices on offer will be "all-touch" and won't have the physical keyboard that BlackBerry users are used to typing on. But Rogers won't be providing details on pricing, availability or specifications until early in the new year.

Research In Motion has previously said an "all-touch" version of its new phones would be released first, followed by a model with a physical keyboard shortly afterward.

RIM announced separately that it's giving an invitation-only preview of the BlackBerry 10 to more an 120 select government and private-sector customers in a variety of industries.

The two announcements are part of efforts to build interest in a new generation of BlackBerrys in hopes of reviving the Canadian technology company.

The BlackBerry 10 smartphones are seen as make-or-break products for Research In Motion, which has faced intense competition from Apple's iPhones and smartphones using the Google Android operating system.

RIM shares closed down 22 cents, or 1.59 per cent, to $13.66 Monday on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR
101.66¢
(+0.29¢)

TSX
12,281.35 (-15.37)

OIL
$87.20 US (+47¢)

GOLD
$1,698.20 US (+$1.20)

Natural gas: $3.36 US (+4¢)
Dow Jones: 13,235.39 (+100.38)

IT'S ACTUALLY NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

SHE SAYS...
Jessica Napier
metronews.ca

Do you have all of your affairs in order? Have you told all of your friends and family just how much you love them? Because if the fear-mongers are to be believed, we only have a few days left to say our goodbyes before an apocalyptic end-of-days descends upon us all on Dec. 21.

A fate foretold by hieroglyphs and perpetuated by a terrible John Cusack disaster movie, the Mayan doomsday prophesy represents the end of the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar. This so-called Day of Reckoning will bring about something (although no one is quite sure what exactly) that will mean the end the world as we know it.

Prepping for reality

And yet, despite all the evidence to the contrary (you know, science), people around the world are very into this faux-pocalypse.

But before you get too nervous about solar flares, catastrophic floods and swarms of killer bees, just stop. NASA went and debunked the whole thing by releasing a video entitled Why the World Didn't End Yesterday, a whole 10 days ahead of schedule. Their official statement is something along the lines of: "Our planet has been getting along just fine for more than four billion years so everybody just relax, OK."

And yet, despite all the evidence to the contrary (you know, science), people around the world are very into this faux-pocalypse. Alarmist bloggers are convincing people to hunker down with canned goods while New Age visionaries are purchasing one-way plane tickets to a remote village in Turkey renowned for its protective energies. And then there's that Chinese farmer who is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars building an ark as a precautionary measure — AN ARK!

I'm tempted to join in on the fun: host a doomsday pity party for myself and listen to Britney Spears' Till the World Ends on repeat while drowning my sorrows in a pint of Häagen-Dazs Mayan Chocolate ice cream. But rationally, we all know that we've got nothing to worry about; we're still buying Christmas presents and making plans for New Year's Eve. I'm actually inclined to think that the whole thing might just be a way for companies to cash in on tasteless apocalypse-blowout-sales and end-of-the-world-themed merchandise.

So even though I love a good conspiracy theory, I think I'll side with our modern-day scientists over an ancient civilization and their 5,125-year-old calendar. However, if your Judgement Day predictions involve a sexy astronaut version of Ben Affleck saving us all from a rogue asteroid, you definitely have my attention.

Follow Jessica Napier on Twitter @MetroSheSays

The Mayans never predicted the world would end Dec. 21. The date marks the end of the 13th baktun, a time to flip the calendar to the 14th baktun — a significant day and cause for celebration. PETERCASTLETON/FLICKR

Do you do takeout?

SOLENT

Culinary world record

World's largest pizza gets served

Five Italian chefs have set a new record for the world's largest pizza, which is a staggering 40 metres in diameter — the length of nearly three buses.

Such was the size of the massive margherita that the chefs in Rome had to bake the dough in 5,234 separate batches over a 48-hour period.

The gargantuan food item is made gluten-free in order to raise awareness about celiac disease, the most frequent food intolerance worldwide.

METRO

What's in a name

"We named the pizza Ottavia (after Roman Emperor Octavian Augustus Caesar) to symbolize the hope of a great economic and cultural revival."

Dovilio Nardi, head of the Italian chef quintet

Too cheesy?

- 8,981 kilograms of gluten-free flour, mixed with 11,274 litres of water
- 4,535 kilograms of tomato sauce
- 675 kilograms of margarine
- 250 kilograms of salt: over 40,000 times an adult's recommended daily allowance
- 3,991 kilograms of cheese
- 100 kilograms of lettuce
- 25 kilograms of balsamic vinegar
- 1,354 litres of yeast

Extra, extra large

23,224

kilograms is the total weight of this prodigious pizza. The colossal size is the same as more than 68,300 regular frozen pizzas put together.
The team broke the previous record, set in 1990 by Norwood Pick 'n Pay hypermarket in South Africa. The former record holder's pizza was made of gluten and measured 37 metres.

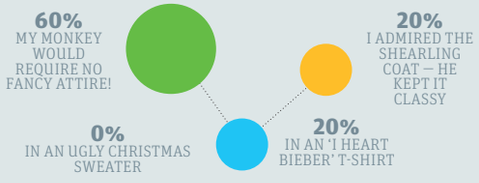
Online

For more of Metro's voices, visit metronews.ca.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

If you had been the owner of the Ikea monkey, how would you have dressed it for its international debut?


60%
MY MONKEY WOULD REQUIRE NO FANCY ATTIRE!
20%
I ADMIRED THE SHEARLING COAT — HE KEPT IT CLASSY
0%
IN AN UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER
20%
IN AN 'I HEART BIEBER' T-SHIRT

Twitter

@charliedemers: The only way I know to wrap up a gang fight is with a spirited rendition of "With A Little Help From My Friends."

@MayorGregor: Great to see @bifnakedc + Dave Babych on the street today supporting our entrepreneurs + writers @MegaphoneMag

@StarWestBureau: Blatant failures by police investigators including Vancouver police and RCMP led to years of women going missing, inquiry concludes today.

@BCLionsDen: Still looking for that gift for the #BCLions fan in your life? Locker Room Sale is this Thursday from 5:00-8:00pm at the Surrey facilty

@CityHallWchVAN: Vancouver beats NYC as most expensive city in North America – http://is.gd/NyolFe Foreign investors cited as reason

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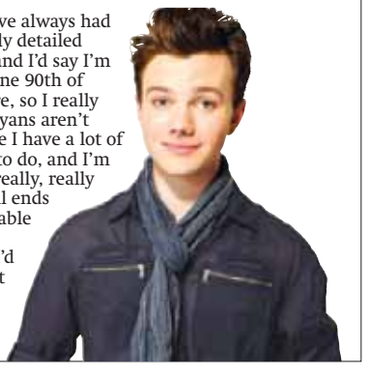
With Dec. 21 fast approaching, we ask a few celebs what they might do if they were faced with the end of the world

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

CELEBRITY BUCKET LISTS

Chris Colfer (Glee)



You know, I've always had a really, really detailed bucket list, and I'd say I'm only about one 90th of the way there, so I really hope the Mayans aren't right because I have a lot of stuff I want to do, and I'm going to be really, really pissed if it all ends and I'm not able to. If I had a month left, I'd probably just go on a very expensive vacation.

Joel McHale (Community)

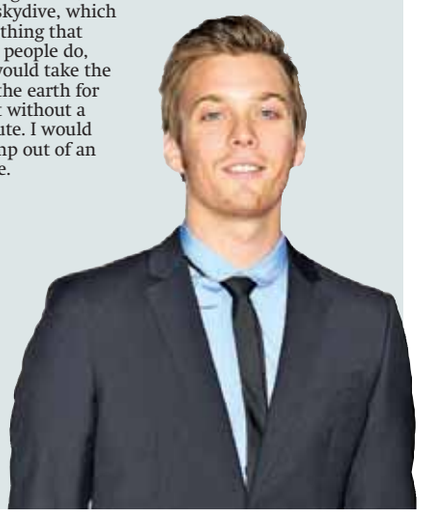
An end of the world bucket list? Yes. A really sturdy bucket.

Maggie Grace (Taken 2)

Honestly, one of my sort of bucket list items I just ticked off. I did a Broadway play for the first time. It was terrifying. But it's something I've wanted to do since I was 11 years old. So I at least checked one off.

Jake Abel (The Host)

If I knew the world was going to end, I would skydive, which is something that normal people do, but it would take the end of the earth for me. But without a parachute. I would just jump out of an airplane.



Teresa Palmer (Warm Bodies)

Oh gosh, end of the world bucket list? Yeah, I would've liked to have had a baby before the end of the world, but there's not really time for that. I'm not sure what I'm going to do. I want to jump out of a plane, for sure. I would just eat so much food, 24/7 just eat and eat and eat. Travel around the world, eating from all different cultures. That'd be amazing.

Kellan Lutz (The Twilight Saga)

No, I don't (have one), because I don't believe the world's going to come to an end. God never gave a date so I don't believe it's going to happen. So there's no need for me to make a plan B with all that. I'm just living my life every day to the fullest.

Week of Armageddon

Check out Metro all week for more stories of apocalyptic proportions.

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Apatow makes his films a family affair

This is 40. Director's biggest worry when working with his kids on set is preventing a revolt from happening

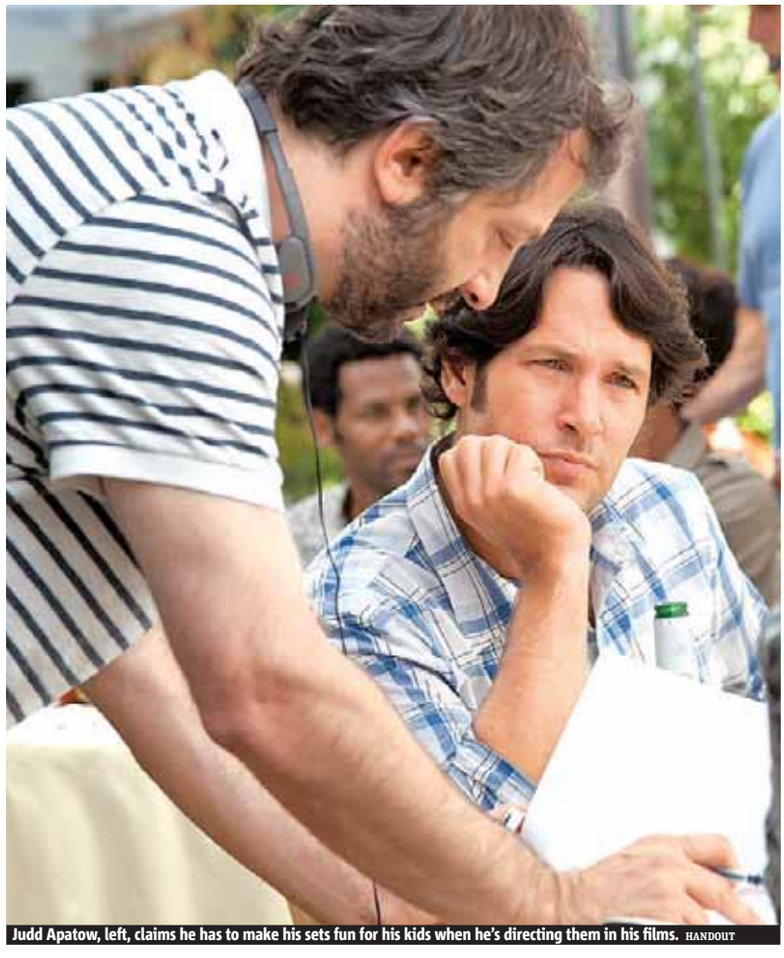
NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

This is 40 marks the third time Judd Apatow has directed his wife, Leslie Mann, and their two daughters, Maude and Iris, following Knocked Up and Funny People. But with the girls getting older, the writer-director is giving them more to do on screen — something he admits can backfire while filming. We sat down with Apatow to discuss the family working dynamic.

When you're directing your own children, is there a sort of loophole around the usual Hollywood laws for child labour?
There isn't, really. In fact, it works the other way because I look like a jerk in front of the crew if I do anything that seems like pushing with my kids. I have to be very polite — a kiss-ass, really — so there isn't a revolt on the set. I was always afraid that they would just get bored or tired and want to go home, and I would be stuck in this position of saying, "You're not allowed to go home, you're at work." So I worked very hard to make it fun for them so they wanted to stay on the set. And they did. In real life, at that time they had a lot of sibling rivalry, and as a result of having to play out all these scenes together where they fight really hard, I think they've seen it from another angle and ever since we shot the movie, they've gotten along really well.

Are they at all worried that as they grow up they'll be the subject of more of your movies?
We haven't talked about it. They're at that age where every six months they're completely different people, so there's not that much long-range thinking going on. They had a really good time making the movie, they're proud of it, they're having their first real experience of what it's like putting a movie out into the world that they're proud of, but they don't have any plans about acting. They have enough trouble with math and biology.

Was there any effort to get Katherine Heigl involved for at least a cameo?
I just thought honestly about where everybody would be five years later. It would make sense to me that (Heigl's character) Allison got a job somewhere else working at a TV station. They're probably in Atlanta or something like that, Seth and Katherine. I didn't want to bring a lot of people back because I wanted this to be its own world.



Judd Apatow, left, claims he has to make his sets fun for his kids when he's directing them in his films. HANDOUT

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Oops! I did it again? Break up talk circulates for Britney and beau

Jason Trawick and Britney Spears

Britney Spears' relationship with Jason Trawick may be about to end, though the X Factor host and pop star is apparently the last to know, according to Hollyscoop.

"Jason has told Britney's entire family that he's planning to leave her so Britney will have a support system when he breaks the bad news," a source says of the couple, who are reportedly spending the holidays apart. Trawick is said to be waiting until Spears' work on the current season of the X Factor is wrapped before dumping her.

Matt Damon sets it straight on his sexual orientation

Matt Damon ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Matt Damon has been dodging gay rumours ever since he and best friend Ben Affleck burst on the scene with Good Will Hunting, but he's avoided acknowledging them — until now. "I never denied those rumours because I was offended and didn't want to offend my friends who were gay — as if being gay were some kind of f--ing disease," he tells Playboy magazine. "It put me in a weird position in that sense. The whole thing was just gross."

Newtown tragedy: Morgan Freeman didn't comment

Morgan Freeman

Not so fast, Facebook users. A lengthy quote attributed to Morgan Freeman in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., elementary school shooting tragedy has been making the rounds on the social networking site, suggesting media coverage encouraged the shooter. The only problem is those aren't Freeman's words. "Morgan neither made statements or posted those statements. We are trying to find out who did, but they did not originate from him," a source for the actor tells E! News.

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Last minute holiday health

Fitness. Celebrity trainer Ashley Borden has a Christmas gift for you: expert tips to avoid temptation

ROMINA McGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

What was the point of kicking yourself into shape last January if you're going to let all your efforts go to waste in the last two weeks of the year?

"You should absolutely indulge during the holidays because if you restrict yourself, you'll only feel deprived and frustrated," Ashley Borden, who trains celebrities including Ryan Gosling, Christina Aguilera and Ke$ha, tells Metro. "The problem is that people tend to adopt an 'all or nothing' attitude and as a result, their fitness and diet completely goes out of the window."

Here's what she'd do in certain situations.

Scenario 1: There is no way I can ditch my family so I can go off and do some exercise.

"I don't believe that because you're with your family, you can't take the time out to workout," says Borden.

"Why would you turn off your life and drop the things that are actually helping you feel good? Many people find dealing with the full family dynamic both stressful and emotional — making it even more important that you set aside an hour or so each day of 'me' time where you can let off some steam.

"It may seem a little selfish, but don't care."

TIP: Focusing on yourself will make you a more productive family member because you'll feel less resentful for being locked in the house stuffing the turkey and chopping up carrots.

Scenario 2: The holidays are about switching off. I don't want to stick to a schedule.

"Normally, people find it easy to stay on track because they follow a set routine. They get up, cycle to work, have breakfast and so on," says Borden. "But during the holidays, because there isn't the same schedule and structure, diet and fitness habits can become very erratic. The assumption is that once it's all over, losing the extra weight and bloat will be easy when deep down we all know we're going to struggle. The key is to not schedule in exercise. Make loose but firm plans — book a spinning class or stock up on fruit and vegetables so you have something to snack on."

TIP: Wake up without an alarm. Have some breakfast before you do a quick 30 minute cardio workout. Once you've done that, you can relax for the rest of the day.

Don't get sucked into the Santarexic habits this month. THINKSTOCK

Scenario 3: Festive food is my favourite. I'm going to starve myself all day just so I can stuff my face at dinnertime.

"Never assume that it's OK to skip meals during the day in order to lash out at Christmas dinner. This kind of behaviour will really screw up your eating patterns," warns Borden.

"Your body can't assimilate and metabolize all these calories at once and that's how you end up gaining weight. It's much easier to eat a normal dinner and allow yourself a bit of indulgence. One slice of cake won't make or break your body."

TIP: On days when you know you're likely to over-eat, try and break a sweat for at least 20 minutes.

Scenario 4: It's impossible to workout in my hotel.

"If you're really stuck at your in-laws in the middle of nowhere, you always have your body weight to use.

Set up a mini circuit in your room — even if you have very little space, you can train for around 30 minutes by doing reverse lunges, planks or pushups.

If you want to do some cardio, pack a jump rope."

TIP: Invest in some resistance bands with handles. And, again, pack a jump rope in your luggage.

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Velvety chocolate flavour shines in rich cheesecake

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This recipe serves 12. MARK SHAPIRO, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

You'll never eat a cheesecake that's so dense and rich tasting, yet so low in fat and calories. The combo of semi-sweet chocolate and cocoa powder gives this cheesecake its velvety chocolate flavour. Garnish it with fresh berries.

It comes in at 259 calories and just 10 grams of fat per serving.

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray 9-inch springform pan with cooking oil.

2. Crust: Combine wafer crumbs, 2 tbsp water and oil in bowl and mix well. Pat onto bottom and slightly up sides of springform pan.

3. Filling: Combine chocolate chips and 2 tbsp water in microwaveable bowl and microwave for 40 seconds. Stir until smooth.

4. Combine chocolate mix with ricotta and cream cheese, 1 cup sugar, cocoa, egg and 1/2 cup sour cream in bowl of food processor and purée until smooth. Pour over crust. Bake 30 minutes. Centre should still be slightly loose.

5. For topping, mix sour cream and sugar. Carefully spoon over cake. Bake another 10 minutes. Cool on rack, then chill completely before removing the sides of the pan and serving. Top with chocolate wafer crumbs. ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

Ingredients

Crust
- 2 cups chocolate wafer crumbs
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil

Cheesecake
- 1/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 1/2 cups light smooth ricotta cheese
- 3/4 cup light cream cheese
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup low-fat sour cream
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour

Topping
- 1 1/4 cups low-fat sour cream
- 2 tbsp sugar

Health Solutions

Your holiday cheat sheet

NUTRI-BITES
Theresa Albert, DHN, RNCP
myfriendinfood.com

Oh, come on, it's the holidays! We both know you are going to eat more than you should, so let's just embrace it. I encourage my private clients to switch to a "nutrient per calorie" model when they are going to cheat. That means that if you can't keep calories low, focus on those items that are loaded with nutrients and use them to enhance your "cheats." Here are three ideas:

1. Cranberry sauce

Assuming it is homemade and not from a can (which likely means more sugar), this condiment is a great way to stretch that brownie/Nanaimo bar/cake you have on your plate. A couple of tablespoons on the side will give you a filling, tart kick of phytonutrients and fibre. The hope is that you can now resist that second slice...

2. Spice it up

Your brain registers intense flavours more actively than bland ones. This means that adding spiciness or low calorie intensity may help you feel satisfied with less food. Think hot sauce, spicy mustard or even horseradish — all will perk up your palate!

3. Fresh herbs

Oh, I know they are often only on the platter for garnish but who says you can't hog garnish? Fresh herbs are full of chlorophyll and tummy soothing nutrients that may replace the extra space on your plate that you are tempted to fill with mashed potatoes.

THERESA ALBERT IS AN AUTHOR AND ON CALL, PRIVATE NUTRITIONIST IN TORONTO. SHE IS @THERESAALBERT ON TWITTER AND FOUND DAILY AT MYFRIENDINFOOD.COM

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Talk with kids about shooting, make them feel safe: Experts

Family. Following the Connecticut shooting, it's best to limit kids' exposure to media

The killings at a Connecticut elementary school left parents struggling to figure out what, if anything, to tell their children.

President Barack Obama said he and his wife, Michelle, would tell their daughters that they love them and hug them a little tighter. Experts say that's a good example to follow. Parents also should allow children to talk about their feelings in the coming days while sheltering them from the 24/7 media coverage of the event, they say.

A man gunned down more than two dozen people Friday, most of them kids at a Newtown, Conn., elementary school. The shooter was among the 28 people left dead, apparently from a self-inflicted wound.

Whitney Finucane wasn't sure how and when she would talk with her son, Nico, about the shooting. She kissed and hugged him when he came out from kindergarten at Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary in Providence, R.I., on Friday.

"I don't know how to explain insanity and evil to a five-year-old," she said. "I don't know that he can really grasp it."

Even the youngest schoolchildren are likely to hear about it, said Glenn Saxe, chairman of the department of child and adolescent psychiatry at NYU Langone Medical Center.

"It's really important, especially at this time, for parents to check in with their kids, to be attuned to how they're feeling, how they're doing and to answer questions honestly and straightforwardly," he said. "For any other kid in school, this has meaning. Parents need to understand that even in surprising ways, this can affect their kids."

Parents can start by asking their children what they've already heard and what questions they have, said Dr. David Schonfeld, a pediatrician and director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. If they ask why someone would do something like this, it's OK to say you don't know.

"I wouldn't provide false reassurance or dismiss legitimate concerns," he said. "We don't help children by telling them they shouldn't be afraid of things that are frightening."

Parents can tell their kids, "What is most important is that you're safe and you're going to be safe," said Dr. Louis Kraus, chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Above all, parents need to try to help their children feel safe, he said. Helping kids return to or maintain normal routines can help minimize their anxiety, Kraus said.

Some children may ask the same questions over and over as a way to seek reassurance, and parents shouldn't dismiss them, said Dr. David Fassler, a child and adolescent psychiatrist in Burlington, Vt.

"Acknowledge and validate the child's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Let them know that you think their questions and concerns are important

Safety at school

As students head back to their classrooms on Monday, parents and children should know that school shootings are rare and schools still are among the safest places, said William Lassiter of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence. Parents can ask their principal or parent-teacher group for a copy of their school crisis plan.

Notice whether schools stick to their own security plans, he said. Do people have to check in at the door and sign in at the front office, for example?

"A lot of times, the parents are the ones who need to remind the school," he said.

It's important to know what to tell your children after a tragedy. ISTOCK IMAGES

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Games to raise your money IQ

Alison on Money. Website's game, called Cranial Cash Clash, helps teach you money skills

YOUR MONEY
Alison Griffiths
money@metronews.ca

It's not too late to raise your holiday money IQ! If you're feeling a little overwhelmed as the big day draws near, there's nothing like a game to improve your outlook.

The Investor Education Fund (getsmarteraboutmoney.ca) has created Cranial Cash Clash, a series of interactive games to teach money skills.

The latest, Gift Thrift, offers tips about holiday spending, the use of credit cards and related topics such as credit ratings. You may find that a couple of the questions have fairly obvious answers, but they do get you thinking.

On the other hand, there are many you likely don't know.

Try this one: If you decide to give a gift to your favourite charity or charities, does the amount you give affect the tax credit you receive?

Which is right?

A. No. As long as they are accredited charities, the benefit to you is the same.

B. Yes, but there may be restrictions for out-of-province charities.

C. Yes, the tax credit goes up if you give more than $200.

D. No, it's a 15 per cent credit no matter how much you give.

The answer is C.

Gift Thrift can be played via Facebook with friends or family members. The Leaderboard lets you log in and keep track of scores as you go.

There are eight other Cranial Cash Clash games dealing with everything from investing to financial scams and debt.

The questions are randomized so you can't practice the answers for a certain win.

Bonus points are awarded when you answer within a certain time. If you flub, as I did on a question about credit scores (my finger slipped, really!), you can input your email address at the end of the game to receive information about that subject area. You'll also see a link to a more detailed explanation.

Though not designed for youth, the series is also a great way to get teens and young adults thinking and talking about money issues. They won't be familiar with many of the topics, but the questions will stimulate discussion.

Cranial Cash Clash is a nice break from holiday shopping.

Contact Alison at griffiths.alison@gmail.com or alisongriffiths.ca

Pop quiz

What is the interest free grace period on credit cards?

- **A.** There isn't one
- **B.** 30 days
- **C.** 14 days
- **D.** 21 days

• Answer (D)

4 SPORTS

Stalemate

No talks scheduled, but NHLPA 'ready to meet'

The standoff continues for the NHL and NHL Players' Association.

Another day passed without communication between the sides, who have no plans to return to the bargaining table and appear to be digging in.

"We've always been willing and ready to bargain," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr told The Canadian Press Monday night. "It seems like the league has ... paused or cut the process off several times over the last few months. I don't know that we ever have.

"We're ready to meet whenever they're ready to meet."

According to Fehr, he and deputy NHL commissioner Bill Daly last communicated with one another via email on Friday night. Daly indicated that there had been no miscommunication between the parties.

"They know where we are and we know where they are," he said. "We are still a long way apart. I'm sure if either one of us has a new idea for moving the process forward, we know how to get in touch."

Fehr was unwilling to discuss the possibility of the NHLPA filing for a "disclaimer of interest."

Players began casting electronic ballots Sunday on whether they would give their executive board the authority to dissolve the union, which would allow them to challenge the legality of the lockout in court and file anti-trust lawsuits against the league. Two-thirds of union members must vote in favour by Thursday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Alex Edler told the Team 1040 website Monday that his back is still sore, but he's ready to play again. CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Blue-liner Edler good to go, but NHL's not

NHL. Bulging disc is healing and Canucks defenceman is cleared to play

CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

Alex Edler has been cleared to play by the Vancouver Canucks, which in a typical NHL regular season would be a boon for the local team.

Instead, due to the ongoing lockout and pending free agency, there is the possibility Edler may have already played his final game as a Canuck.

"I feel little ups and downs," the 26-year-old defenceman told reporters Monday in an audio clip on the Team 1040 radio website.

"But I've been skating five times a week for over a month now and it's been good.... Hasn't been any red lights. I've been able to do everything. That doesn't mean that I'm not feeling it. It's (sometimes) sore and stiff but, I mean, it was sore and stiff last year, too, and I played 82 games."

He conceded that his back may not yet be at 100 per cent health.

Edler also underwent an operation on his back during the 2010-11 season, which forced him out of action for nearly three months. He returned to the lineup with two games remaining in the regular season, then went on to play in all 25 games during the Canucks' run to the Stanley Cup final.

For most of that postseason he provided not only timely offensive contributions but intimidating physical play.

Edler had been skating at UBC for the past few months during the lockout but was not fit to play due to a bulging disc in his back.

The Canucks' third-round pick in the 2004 NHL entry draft and a native of Ostersund, Sweden, Edler is in the final year of a four-year contract that pays out at $3.25 million US per season.

A fixture on the back end of the Canucks power play and with a growing reputation as a hard-hitting blue-liner, Edler amassed a career high in goals and points during the 2011-12 regular season.

By the numbers

49

Alex Edler scored 11 times and had 49 points in the 2011-12 regular season, filling the role of offensive defenceman left vacant when the Canucks dealt Christian Ehrhoff's negotiating rights just after the 2011 playoffs.

Jets' playoff hopes grounded by Titans

Running back Chris Johnson of the Tennessee Titans runs against the New York Jets Monday in Nashville, Tenn. ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Johnson went 94 yards for the longest touchdown run in the NFL since 2006 and the Tennessee Titans beat the Jets 14-10 on Monday night to eliminate New York from playoff contention.

Jake Locker's first touchdown run of the season put Tennessee ahead late in the third quarter and the Titans intercepted four passes by a struggling Mark Sanchez to snap a three-game skid.

After bumbling around all night, the Jets somehow still had a chance to win when they took over at the Tennessee 25 with 47 seconds left following a 19-yard punt by Brett Kern.

Week 15

Titans	Jets
14	10

But Sanchez fumbled a low shotgun snap, Bilal Powell inadvertently kicked the ball away and the Titans recovered to seal it.

It was a fitting end to an ugly game that left New York coach Rex Ryan cursing to himself as he walked off the field.

The Jets (6-8) needed to win their final three games and get help elsewhere to earn a playoff spot. Instead, the Titans sacked Sanchez three times and got a fourth on Tim Tebow, keeping New York out of the playoffs for a second straight season after reaching consecutive AFC title games.

Johnson, with the names of the victims of Friday's shootings in Connecticut written on his cleats, ran a franchise-record 94 yards for a TD in the second quarter. Locker's 13-yard touchdown run at the end of the third put the Titans (5-9) ahead to stay.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soccer. Canada won't rush hiring of men's coach

Canada will name an interim men's coach to handle January soccer friendlies with Denmark and the U.S., according to the president of the Canadian Soccer Association.

The games are the first for Canada since it crashed out of World Cup qualifying in an 8-1 defeat in Honduras in October. Stephen Hart, despite support from his players, resigned days later as coach.

The search for his replacement is ongoing.

The Canadian men, currently ranked 60th in the world, are slated to play No. 22 Denmark in Tucson, Ariz., on Jan. 26 before facing the 27th-ranked Americans three days later in Houston. With European-based players still in season, the Canadian squad will likely draw on MLS players and younger talent.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"There's so many variables when you're looking at this. It's not your standard employment situation."

Canadian Soccer Association president Victor Montagliani. He said Canada's "soft date" for hiring a new head coach is before the Gold Cup in July.

Soccer

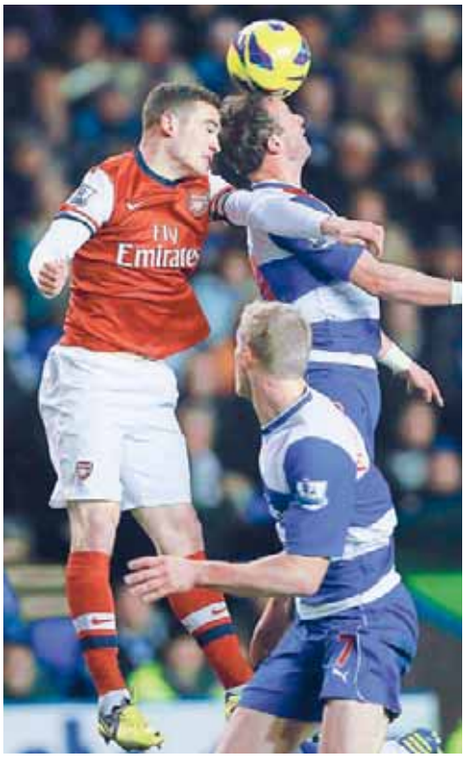
Fans of Russian team call for all-white, non-gay squad

Fans of two-time defending Russian champion Zenit St. Petersburg are calling for non-white and gay players to be excluded from the team.

Supporters' club Landscrona released a manifesto Monday demanding that Zenit field an all-white, heterosexual team. It added "dark-skinned players are all but forced down Zenit's throat" and said gay players were "unworthy of our great city."

Coach Luciano Spalletti said on Zenit's website that "tolerance for me is most of all the ability to understand and accept differences.

"Furthermore, being tolerant means that you fight against any kind of stupidity." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Arsenal rises to the challenge in Reading

Reading's Noel Hunt, top right, vies for the ball with Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen during their English Premier League match on Monday. Santi Cazorla scored a hat trick as Arsenal romped to a 5-2 win in Reading, England. KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

R.A. Dickey, the National League's Cy Young Award winner in 2012, passed a physical on Monday and signed a two-year extension with the Blue Jays with a club option for the 2016 season. DENIS POROY/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Dickey could become legendary Blue Jay

ETHAN ROTBERG
ethan.rotberg@metronews.ca

After inking a contract extension and passing his physical, R.A. Dickey joined the Blue Jays through a seven-player trade with the New York Mets.

There are a lot of reasons to be skeptical of Dickey. It's the easy perspective to take, so here it is.

He is 38 years old. He has no ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching arm. He throws the most fickle and unpredictable type of pitch: The knuckleball. And before he joined the Mets in 2010, he pitched to truly awful results. In his only major-league appearance in 2006, he surrendered six home runs to the Tigers without escaping the fourth inning.

But now Toronto might be called the favourite to win the World Series. That's because there are also reasons to trust Dickey. So, here's the other perspective.

Beyond baseball

Dickey, an English literature major, released an autobiography in 2012 titled Wherever I Wind Up: My Quest for Truth, Authenticity and the Perfect Knuckleball.

- In it, Dickey details the sexual abuse he endured as a child, how his dreams of being a pitcher were nearly destroyed and how he was sustained by his Christian faith while confronting his demons.
- He's also set to publish a children's adaptation of Wherever I Wind Up in fall 2013.

His age does not reflect where he is in his career. Historically, knuckleball pitchers stay effective much longer than their velocity-obsessed cohorts. Fellow knuckleballer Tim Wakefield had one of his finest seasons at age 41. More importantly, Dickey has actually improved as he's entered his late 30s — culminating in 2012's Cy Young Award.

Simply put, Dickey seems to be at his peak. Even if he regresses, he could still be an elite pitcher — an ace, bewildering hitters from the Rogers Centre mound for the next three years.

Dickey didn't always throw the knuckleball, so it's nearly useless to analyze his career prior to his mastery of the pitch back in 2010. Since then, he has continued to make significant adjustments. In 2012, he relied more on a hard knuckleball, a pitch zigzagging towards the plate at upwards of 80 mph. Throwing that fast is rare for a knuckleballer. It allowed him greater control, minimizing walks and allowing him to lead the National League in strikeouts.

Born without the UCL — a ligament on the inner side of the elbow — Dickey shouldn't be able to turn a doorknob without feeling pain. But he can. And he can also throw the filthiest pitch in baseball. Save your Stephen Strasburg changeup, Justin Verlander fastball and Roy Halladay curveball. Dickey's knuckleball makes hitters look silly.

As a baseball player, Dickey is something special. He writes books. He climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to help raise awareness of human trafficking in India. He gives away scores of tickets to underprivileged children.

Imagine a player with the dominance of a Halladay and the folk-hero following of John McDonald.

Follow Ethan Rotberg on Twitter @EthanDR

R.A. Dickey GETTY IMAGES FILE

The deal. Anthopoulos lands true ace

Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopoulos paid a steep price to land knuckleballer R.A. Dickey, but he says it was the deal he needed to make for Toronto to be contenders for longer than just next season.

Anthopoulos made another splashy move, acquiring the 38-year-old reigning NL Cy Young winner in a bid to improve the Jays starting rotation.

"We're just so close to contention," Anthopoulos said on a conference call Monday night. "It's not just about one season, this allows us to put what we feel is a contending team together for an extended run, for a three- to five-year period."

The Jays gave up prized young catcher Travis d'Arnaud to the New York Mets as part of a package.

Toronto then signed Dickey to a two-year contract extension for $29 million US, with a $12-million option for the 2016 season.

The Blue Jays also acquired catcher Josh Thole and minor-league catcher Mike Nickeas, while the Mets received catcher John Buck, minor-league right-hander Noah Syndergaard and minor-league outfielder Wuilmer Becerra.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"Looking forward to a new chapter with the Jays."

R.A. Dickey on Twitter after officially being acquired by the Blue Jays on Monday.

Lin shines bright again in New York

NBA. Rockets point guard helps get win in return to scene of breakout season

His old fans booed him. His old friend clobbered him.

Otherwise, it was Linsanity all over again at Madison Square Garden.

Jeremy Lin had 22 points and eight assists in his return to New York, leading the Houston Rockets to a 109-96 victory Monday night that ended the Knicks' 10-game home winning streak to open the season.

Cheered then jeered, and later floored by Tyson Chandler's flagrant foul, Lin added another masterpiece to the ones he put together last season during the height of his memorable run. No longer the fan favourite he was when wearing the home uniform, Lin got a mixed reception when he left the game with 2:25 remaining and the Rockets leading by 16.

"It was a lot of fun playing out there and I think our team, we took a step in the right direction," Lin said. "And for me, it was great to be back and it was a lot of fun to play on that court again."

The Knicks fell to 18-6, matching the record they finished last season with under Mike Woodson.

Woodson's team decided not to match Houston's contract offer to Lin, and nobody could argue when Raymond Felton, Jason Kidd and Pablo Prigioni led the Knicks to the best record in the Eastern Conference with a team that led the NBA in fewest turnovers.

But Lin was the best point guard on the floor, just as he so often was during his dazzling run last winter, when the NBA's first American-born player of Chinese or Taiwanese descent went from undrafted benchwarmer to the biggest story in basketball.

"He had a good game, without a doubt," Felton said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rockets guard Jeremy Lin drives to the basket on Monday night at Madison Square Garden. ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

NBA

Grizz get best of Bulls in Memphis

Mike Conley had 17 points, Zach Randolph added 10 points and 15 rebounds and the Memphis Grizzlies overcame a poor start to beat the Chicago Bulls 80-71 on Monday night. Conley was six of 12 from the field and had four assists. Rudy Gay had 12 points for Memphis but shot five of 13, continuing his slump.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Grizzlies guard Tony Allen, left, defends Chicago's Nate Robinson on Monday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

Austin given keys to Tiger-Cats

The Hamilton Tiger-Cats announced the hiring of Kent Austin to be the club's head coach, general manager and vice-president of football operations on Monday.

Austin won a Grey Cup as the Saskatchewan Roughriders' head coach in 2007.

Austin takes over as head coach from George Cortez, who was fired last week after compiling a 6-12 record in his first season with Hamilton. Last season's GM, Bob O'Billovich, has been offered another position with the club. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Kent Austin was named the Tiger-Cats' head coach in Hamilton on Monday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
It may be hard to tell fact from fiction today, so don't jump to conclusions. What others say and what others mean are likely to be two different things, so it's essential that you read between the lines.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Attitude is everything, especially on the work front where you need to convince yourself that all things are possible. Your thoughts, more than ever today, will create your reality. Think success and you will be a success.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You would be wise not to make any major decisions or announcements today. You may be bursting to tell the world about what you have done but you will get a much better response if you leave it a while.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You are in danger of making something that is not that important appear bigger than it actually is. Your task today is to focus your mind on something that makes you feel good, something that lifts your spirits to new heights.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Don't be too eager to make changes today because there is a lot you don't know. That applies to all areas of your life but especially to your work and career. Hints and gossip could easily mislead you.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Most of the time, you put logic before emotion but today's aspects warn you could go right the other way and act on feelings alone. Will it pay off? Maybe not, exactly, but no great harm will come of it.

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You will get conflicting information from people with different agendas today and there is no way of knowing who is telling the truth. Therefore, you must ignore everything and act only on what your inner voice tells you.

Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
You are reading too much into a situation that is really quite simple. Not only that, but certain individuals are trying to influence your thinking to make you feel insecure. Don't let it happen. Believe in yourself.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
If knowledge is power then it stands to reason that the more knowledge you have about what is going on, the more power you have to influence the outcome. But don't give knowledge away or your power will fade.

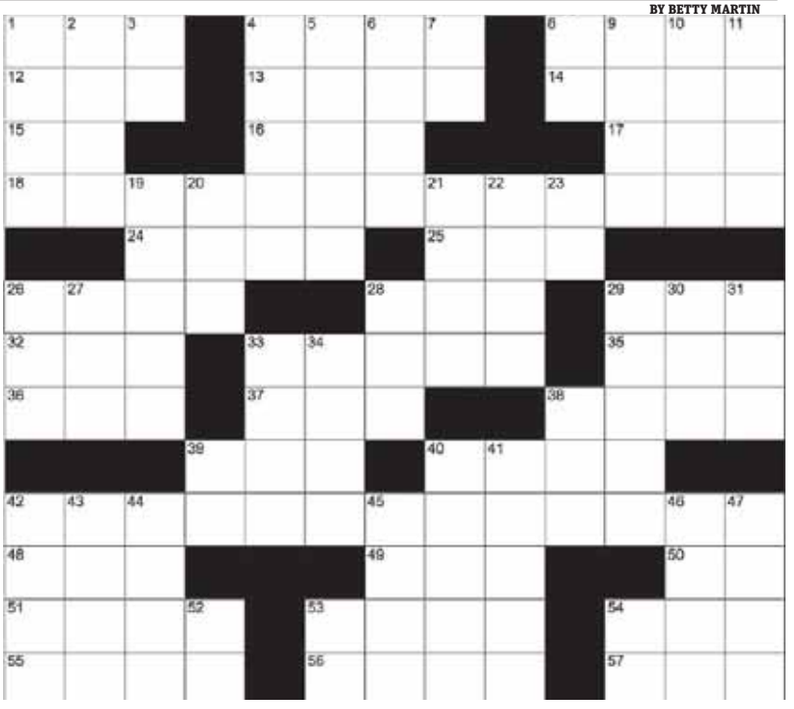
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Someone will go out of their way to make life difficult for you today, but if you stay calm and refuse to react you will do your reputation a power of good. Always behave as if the world is watching you.

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You could easily allow yourself to believe that you can do or say anything without repercussion, which is a dangerous attitude to take. Think before you act today. It could save you a lot of trouble.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You may think that by supporting certain causes you are doing good in the world but are you truly committed on a personal level? One cause above all oth ers is precious to you — give it your undivided attention. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

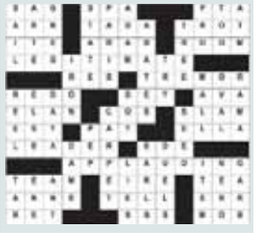
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Soft throw
4. Pull behind
8. Portico
12. French soul
13. Called up
14. TV executive Griffin
15. What Gloria called Edith
16. Invoice abbr.
17. Old model car
18. Rain or snow
24. Part of the eye
25. Tic tac toe win
26. Editing mark
28. Sanford and —
29. Coral reef
32. Summer cooler
33. Parisian school
35. Beer
36. Writing implement
37. Contented sighs
38. Elevator pioneer
39. —: Crime Scene Investigation
40. Rattle
42. Susan Lucci daytime soap (3 words)
48. Island welcome
49. Actor Wallach
50. "—the Right Thing"
51. Work on the street
53. General vicinity
54. Gun the engine
55. Olden sword
56. Workplace ogre, sometimes
57. Found on 39 across (abbr.)

Down
1. Desktop fixture
2. Actor Sharif
3. Who Wants to – a Millionaire?
4. Let the water out
5. Highway exits
6. Hostile
7. "I Will Survive" singer (init.)
8. Size before med. and lg.
9. Actress — Hatcher
10. Black and white cookie
11. Big name in cosmetics
19. Comic DeGeneres
20. So-so grade
21. Hammer or saw
22. First class (2 words)
23. "— Sir, With Love"
26. Drop bait lightly on the water
27. Dutch city
28. Distress call letters
29. Prepare food for a party
30. Living It Up! With — and Jack
31. Affirmative
33. Moderate
34. Elegant
38. This — House
39. She played Katherine Wellington on Harper's Island (init.)
40. Irritates
41. Assumed name
42. Swiss mountains
43. List
44. Inhabit
45. Medal recipient
46. Paradise
47. Star
52. Shoe width
53. Blood type
54. Host of '70s Family Feud (init.)

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

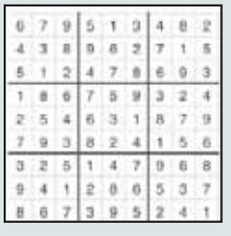
See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

		8			2			4
9				5				
		5				8	7	
1			2	7				5
3			5		6			9
2				3	1			7
	6	7				2		
				9				8
8			1			5		

Yesterday's Sudoku



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- Pine Centre

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